

APPENDIX A. Comments on the proposed Rehbein addition to Fish Creek WMA project and EA received by FWP during the comment period. (Comments received via E = email, M = mail.)

Com- men- ter #	Via	Para- graph	Comment	Name
1	E		I am Opposed to the acquisition of the land by FWP. The Department has taken enough private land out of circulation. The Fish Creek WMA & State Park is more than enough.	Kathy Stearns
2	E		I support the proposed purchase of the 320-acre property from Doug and Annette Rehbein as an addition to the FCWMA. The price seems a little high, but if it was subdivided it would certainly be more. I would justify this purchase to protect the creek frontage alone.	Bert Otis
3	E		I know this piece of property. It is a logical addition to the Fish Creek WMA. The area provides quality white-tailed deer hunting, as well as important trout habitat. I strongly support the acquisition.	Joel Webster
4	E		As a resident of Montana and a licensed hunter, I strongly support the acquisition of this property for the hunters, fishermen, and residents of Montana for this and future generations to come of both humans and wildlife.	William J (Jack) Reneau
5	E		I support this purchase. Fish Creek is the most important bull trout habitat in the Middle Clark Fork and ensuring continuity between spawning habitat and the rest of the river is extremely important for bull trout. This parcel will protect critical habitat from development and will assure the public access to this great fishing stretch for the future.	Carey Schmidt
6a	E	1	On behalf of the WestSlope Chapter of Trout Unlimited and its 600+ members in western Montana, I wish to state our emphatic support of this project.	WestSlope Chapter of Trout Unlimited (Carey Schmidt)
		2	This purchase is critical to maintaining the integrity of Fish Creek as a connected and high quality habitat for threatened bull trout. As bull trout habitat continues to diminish, Fish Creek continues to maintain higher redd counts than other tributaries, cementing its critical importance. Fish Creek is a critical source of cold clean water for the Middle Clark Fork region that not only provides important spawning habitat, but provides important sanctuary habitat for trout in the Clark Fork Alberton Gorge. As we have seen in the last few years, summer water temperatures continue to increase dramatically stressing trout. Fish Creek is important now but will become even more critical in the future.	
		3	The Fish Creek state park and Fish Creek WMA are touchstone acquisitions of western Montana public land. The region is characterized by wild and rugged public lands. This acquisition will ensure that over a mile of Fish Creek will remain publicly accessible in the region. Public access is becoming more and more difficult. This purchase will ensure continuity of public access in the WMA.	
		4	This parcel is an important connection for wildlife as well as fish as deer and elk use this area to travel to winter ranges.	
		5	If we do not move forward with this purchase, it will open the land to development, which could include substantial degradation of the adjacent riparian area and impede fish and wildlife use. Moreover, degradation will increase sediment load and decrease flood storage capacity for Fish Creek and degrade its utility for wild trout.	
		6	We appreciate FWP's hard work on this project and hope you will include WestSlope TU and its 600+ members as supporters of the acquisition.	
6b	E	1	My name is Mark Kuipers, President of the WestSlope Chapter of Trout Unlimited, and I represent over 650 members from St. Regis to the west and Bonner to the east. I first visited Fish Creek in April of 1976. We camped by the creek and could see large rainbows spawning in the gravel. It was a beautiful sight and one we want to preserve and protect—forever.	WestSlope Chapter of Trout Unlimited (President, Mark Kuipers)
		2	The small Rehbein inholding that is up for purchase is a special place. It offers valuable rearing sanctuaries for fry and juvenile fish so important for the fish populations in Fish Creek and the Clark Fork.	

3		Over many years our group has demonstrated a long-term commitment to the health of Fish Creek and other tributaries to the Clark Fork. We've provided funding for a land purchase on the main stem in 2014, for a woody debris project in 2012, fish passage and road reclamation in Thompson Creek, Bear Creek and Deer Creek as well as funding projects in the Nine Mile. These projects help fish and provide jobs.	
4		The WestSlope Chapter of Trout Unlimited supports this acquisition and will contribute financially if required as well as providing volunteers if the need arises.	
7	E	I support FWP's purchase of the 320 acre property along the West Fork of Fish Creek. I am a resident of Missoula County and my family and I had fished, camped, hiked, and spent countless hours exploring that property for many years prior to it being sold by Plum Creek to the current owners. Of course, after that sale, the property was barred to the public which was a major disappointment for us and concerning in light of the sensitive habitat in that area. At that time, we were very concerned that development could threaten the integrity of the stream ecology, healthy trout populations, and wildlife habitat. The stretch of river on that property is very special and we know it to be a critical piece of the Fish Creek drainage and a bull trout stronghold, as a principal tributary to the Middle Clark Fork River. I am confident that FWP will provide excellent stewardship of the property for years to come, re-establish the connectivity of the area under unified state ownership, and will ensure that the property may continue to be fully enjoyed by my children and by the many animals and fish that require such critical habitat.	Chris Fagan
8a	E	Thanks Liz for the information. I support this proposal to maintain the integrity of the WMA. I am curious what the price is and where the funds will come from. I will review the EA .	Doug & Dana Austin
8b	E	My wife and I support the acquisition. We live on Nemote Creek, on the border of the northern portion of the WMA north of I-90. I was a logger for Helean Logging for several years in the 60's and 70's, and we have hiked and continue to hike in much of the Great Burn proposed wilderness. This acquisition is in the center of an area deserving of conservation and protection from development.	
9	E	1 OVERALL: I agree with the purchase on the Rehbein property to: 2 a) get it out of private ownership. 3 b) provide a wildlife corridor 4 c) provide public access for recreation (to include ATVs etc.) 5 d) providing excellent fishing 6 Pg 6 top. Proposal offers access for hunters and anglers . <u>Comment:</u> I do not agree with the planned limiting access to only hunters and angler. Therefore request at least one existing logging road through the area be designated for hike, bike, and off road vehicles such as ATV and snowmobile ATV. 7 Pg 9, items 2 and 3. <u>Comment:</u> These items prevent ATV use. Please allow ATV use during the summer months and snowmobile in winter. 8 Pg 11, 3f Deer Creek. <u>Comment:</u> Access for hunters is allowed but the prior road ways are now a mess as they were dug up. Don't dig up existing logging roads. Reason - they make great trails for walking and riding. 9 Pg 17, items 11c. <u>Comment:</u> Again this statement limits the public to hunters, anglers and walkers only. That is a small part of the public thus making it almost private. The item prevents ATV use. Please allow ATV use during the summer months. 10 WFP & WMA Get this straight. Motorized vehicles such as ATV and snowmobile do not cause havoc with wildlife (reference MWFP Fish Creek State Park proposal references). 11 Studies by MT FWP show that when wildlife hear a motor they know exactly where it's at and move around it. 12 It's those that walk in that surprise them (as in bear encounters). 13 So please provide some OHV/ATV trails in the WMA territories.	Jim Merifield
10a	M	I am in favor of purchase of the Rehbein property, however, it seems unwise and inconsistent that FWP would use chemical weed control (e.g., p. 11) and risk a spill in the "the last stronghold for bull trout in the middle Clark Fork region" (p. 3).	William R (Bill) Thomas
10b	M	As soon as FWP acquires the property, the fences and signs should come down.	
11	E	Please buy this before it becomes mini ranches! Thanks.	anonymous 1

12	E		I full support acquisition of this 320 addition to the Fish Creek WMA. It is important habitat for all types of wildlife, offers additional recreational opportunities, and the purchase prevents subdivision of the land.	Grant Petersen
13	E		I fully support the proposed purchase by FWP of the 320 acres that is available adjacent to the Fish Creek WMA. I feel the acquisition and addition of this property to the existing WMA would be hugely beneficial to the wildlife and sportsmen and women of Montana. By not purchasing this property FWP would leave open the possibility of subsequent subdivision and development in an otherwise uninhabited watershed which would be greatly detrimental to the wildlife inhabiting the area. However if FWP were to purchase this property it would remain in a natural state and be available for recreational use and wildlife into the future.	Ryan Richards
14	E		I think that this acquisition is a wise use of public resources and has my full support. Fish Creek is a great recreational area - and the 320 acre addition will shore up possible future issues in regards to any development.	anonymous 2
15	E		Fully support the acquisition and it's inclusion in the Fish Creek WMA.	Jason Williams
16	E		I support the purchase of Fish Creek WMA as it is a good use of funds, I do however feel that too many of our WMAs' are overgrazed. The purchase is a good idea and should proceed.	Charles Murtagh
17	E		<i>[Identical to Comment #13]</i>	Seth Kuhl
18	E		<i>[Identical to Comment #13]</i>	Barry Hodges
19	E		I strongly support the acquisition of the 320 acres of land in the Fish Creek drainage adjacent to the Fish Creek WMA. By purchasing this property, FWP has the opportunity to eliminate the possibility of a subdivision being built within the WMA and permanently protect this special area for wildlife and public recreation.	Travis Heater
20	E	1	I am totally opposed to fwp purchase of this 320 parcel in fish creek.	Leroy Godin
		2	The mn. cty commissioners oppose it because to pay 1.4 million for this land and only pay minimum taxes on it is totally wrong for our tax base in mineral county. Also to put more private land into fwp hands gives the native americans another place to hunt when no one else has the opportunity. Also we don't need to have road access closer to the creek to fish because easier access= poorer fishing. When you can't maintain the road up fish creek now why will spending another million make it easier. The same goes for Tarkio fishing access site, never graded never maintained. This land would benefit Min. Cty more if it were privately developed and put on the tax rolls at a higher bases then what fwp will pay in taxes.	
21	E	1	I strongly support the proposed purchase by Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks of the 320-acre Rehbein Addition to the Fish Creek Wildlife Management Area. The habitat and recreation values of this riparian land are exceptional and, without a purchase by FWP, this land will almost certainly be sold privately, developed for recreational residences, and lost to public use.	Hugh Zackheim
		2	The price is reasonable, as established by independent appraisal, and this transaction is a wise use of the Habitat Montana funds generated through hunting license sales. The federal match, using Pittman-Robertson dollars, further strengthens the case for this land acquisition.	
		3	Thank you for the opportunity to comment.	
22	E		All for. Good use of P-R funds.	Rebecca Spring
23	E		First of all, FWP is great. How you juggle so many plates in the air at the same time is baffling. But the reason for this comment is I am opposed to any more land purchasing in the Fish Creek area. The Mineral County Resource Use Plan even states this. We are already at over 90% public land in the county. FWP has not been a good neighbor with the last 48,000 they bought as they have stopped any development or enhancement of other private ground by NOT allowing utility easements across their lands, which stifles anyone from expanding or developing what little private is left in the Fish Creek Drainage. How much is enough? Your offer of \$620 plus dollars in annual taxes for this doesn't cut it.	Monte Turner
24a	E	1	Thank you for including us in your notice of availability to comment on you recent Draft Environmental Assessment (EA), Rehbein Addition to Fish Creek Wildlife Management Area, comments due Friday, November 6, 2015 1:19 PM. Five Valleys Audubon Society supports Alternative B, the proposed action to purchase the property and incorporate it into the Fish Creek Wildlife Management Area.	Five Valley Audubon (President, Rosemary Leach)

		2	We appreciate the opportunity for riparian and adjacent habitat enhancement and protection (page 9, riparian enhancement projects), as well as the public recreation opportunities that this proposed purchase would provide (page 9, current management guidelines). Moreover, we support conserving wildlife habitats that are located adjacent to or within larger parcels of public ownership, because of the beneficial effects of retaining larger-sized areas with high connectivity and lower rates of fragmentation, compared to smaller parcels in highly fragmented landscapes. We agree that the potential for subdivision and riparian habitat degradation of the parcel is high, if the parcel remains in private ownership (page 8, no action).	
		3	In our assessment, the beneficial effects of acquiring small, inholding parcels to the larger landscape is exponentially greater than the simple addition of the 320 acres involved. We strongly urge the Fish and Wildlife Commission to approve this important and timely land acquisition.	
		4	We will be sending these comments on letterhead to your office as well.	
24b	M		<i>[written letter; comments identical to 24a]</i>	
25	E		I am in favor of the proposal to purchase the Rehbein property. I think it is a wise use of both Pittman-Robertson and Habitat Montana Montana funds, and will provide great opportunity for future generations of Montana outdoorsmen and women.	Randy Hodges
26	E		I think this would be great addition. We need to save as much habitat as we can and create an opportunity for more access.	anonymous 3
27	E	1	Please accept my public comment in support of the Fish Creek WMA addition.	Kathryn QannaYahu
		2	I feel the addition of the 320 acres would benefit the public in many ways. This land would not only help to consolidate an area of multiple public lands, but the riparian acreage especially. As climate change increases, our wildlife and fish will need access to these resources that are managed for the public, with the fish/wildlife in mind, not development.	
28	E	1	Hellgate Hunters and Anglers supports the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks acquiring the 320-acre Rehbein addition to the Fish Creek Wildlife Management Area.	Hellgate Hunters & Anglers (President, Kit Fischer)
		2	Our members include over 300 hunters and anglers who value public recreational access.	
		3	We're thankful that hunters and anglers will gain access to this property, which includes 1.3 miles of the West Fork of Fish Creek.	
		4	We recognize the importance of:	
		5	•The West Fork of Fish Creek to bull trout and cutthroat trout in Fish Creek and the Clark Fork River	
		6	•The riparian area along the West Fork to many species of wildlife	
		7	•The West Fork as a whole to wildlife moving between the high-elevation lands owned and managed by the Forest Service to lands lower in the drainage now largely owned and managed by the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks.	
		8	•Fish Creek as a whole to wildlife moving between the Crown of the Continent and the Bitterroot Range	
		9	In summary, we strongly support the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks' acquisition of the 320-acre Rehbein property and for its management for fish and wildlife and for non-motorized public access after being added to the Fish Creek Wildlife Management Area.	
29	E	1	The Shining Mountains Chapter of the Montana Wilderness Association supports the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks acquiring the 320-acre Rehbein addition to the Fish Creek Wildlife Management Area.	Shining Mountain Chapter of Montana Wilderness Association (President, Daphne Herling)
		2	Our members include hikers, horsemen, hunters, anglers, and nature enthusiasts who enjoy the front country in Fish Creek as well as the Great Burn recommended wilderness higher up the drainage.	
		3 - 9	<i>[Paragraphs 3-9 are identical to Comment #28, paragraphs 3-9.]</i>	

30	E	1a1b	<p>These comments represent the views of the Ninemile Wildlife Workgroup, a group of Huson/Ninemile/Alberton residents and other parties committed to promoting knowledge and stewardship of wildlife and habitats within these communities and surrounding public lands. Details about us can be found on our website:</p> <p>http://www.ninemilewildlife.org/</p>	Ninemile Wildlife Workgroup (Chair of the Board, Pat Sweeney,)
		2	<p>In February, 2014 we commented on the Fish Creek State Park Draft EA and welcome the opportunity to comment on the Rehbein Addition to the Fish Creek Wildlife Management Area. Our mission area, which includes this project area, is located in an important connectivity area between the large Bitterroot (Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness) and Crown of the Continent (Bob Marshall Complex Wilderness) ecosystems that provides a biological bridge permitting migration and genetic exchange between these vast islands of security for far-ranging species of wildlife to persist. One of our goals is to maintain and enhance the ability of wildlife to move freely and securely through the mixture of public lands, private lands, and transportation routes. It is very important to our members to protect and enhance wildlife connectivity which would happen if this parcel became part of the Fish Creek Wildlife Management Area.</p>	
		3	<p>Selecting alternative B, acquiring the addition, would better protect habitat for multiple species of wildlife. Fish Creek State Park and Wildlife Management area is categorized in the Northern Continental Divide Ecosystem Grizzly Conservation Strategy (US Fish and Wildlife Service) as being in a Demographic Connectivity Area. Grizzly bears will likely soon reestablish in or near the project area and protecting this land will enable them to move more freely across the landscape. This area is also part of the high-priority forest carnivore linkage zone for species such as Canada lynx and wolverine and protections would better protect multiple species. The West Fork of Fish Creek is noted as the last stronghold for bull trout in the middle Clark Fork region. Protecting the creek and riparian area would help this listed species along with the native westslope cutthroat trout to persist.</p>	
		4	<p>The project area is heavily used for recreation. I used to hunt this area when it was Plum Creek Timber land, and was fortunate to have harvested a white-tailed deer on the proposed property and would welcome the opportunity to hunt here again. Deer, elk and grouse are all present here and acquisition would provide additional hunting opportunities for these and other species. The road through here goes to the Hole-in-the-Wall Resort and the Clearwater Crossing Campground and Trailhead. It is uncertain how the recent fire will affect recreational use but the trails were popular with many people and served as a gateway to the Great Burn. Acquiring this parcel will provide extra hunting opportunities and perhaps even more importantly, would manage noxious weeds. Without weed management, recreationists travelling through this area could act as vectors spreading weeds to non-infested areas.</p>	
		5	<p>The Board of Directors of the Ninemile Wildlife Workgroup requests that you select Alternative B. Acquiring this 320 acre parcel would improve the Fish Creek Wildlife Management Area and would benefit Montana, our community, and our wildlife and fish resources.</p>	
31	E	1	<p>The Montana Chapter of Backcountry Hunters and Anglers supports the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks acquiring the 320-acre Rehbein addition to the Fish Creek Wildlife Management Area.</p>	Montana Chapter of Backcountry Hunters & Anglers (Co-Chairs, Hannah Ryan and John Sullivan)
		2	<p>Our members include hunters, anglers and others who value public recreational access, specifically non-motorized access in largely natural settings. We are very supportive of preventing this area from potentially being subdivided for development. The unique ecological value of the Rehbein property would be of great value to our members and others, specifically the 1.3 miles of the West Fork of Fish Creek, if acquired by FWP.</p>	
		3	<p>We support the proposed management guidelines that would allow motorized access only on the West Fork Fish Creek Road as it passes through the property and that would not allow camping—with the area managed primarily for its value to fish and wildlife and for recreation on foot.</p>	
		4-5	<p>[Paragraphs 4-5 identical to Comment #28, paragraphs 4-5.]</p>	
		6	<p>YThe riparian and forest corridors along the West Fork to many species of wildlife.</p>	
		7-8	<p>[Paragraphs 7-8 identical to Comment #28, paragraphs 7-8]</p>	

9			In summary, we support the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks' acquisition of the 320-acre Rehbein property for its management for fish and wildlife and for public access.	
32	M	1	Several issues should be clarified from the Mineral County Commissioners' perspective in regard to the Rehbein property on West Fork Fish Creek Road. The issue of subdivision has been voiced several times to the Environmental Health and Planning Department. Due to several challenges, accomplishing a subdivision of the Rehbein property seems very unlikely.	Mineral County Commissioners (Laurie Johnson and Roman Zylawy)
		2	Since the property is not accessed by a county right-of-way, the owner would need to facilitate a road agreement that would create an unrestricted public road. The road segments of both Fish Creek Road and West Fork Fish Creek Road would need to be brought up to subdivision standards unless variances in the standards were granted. The developer must address safety concerns for emergency services, and adequate fire protection would be highly unlikely given the location.	
		3	We would not foresee that a potential subdivision could generate a return that would warrant the costs of improvements required under the Mineral County Subdivision Regulations. The rationale for purchasing the property should not reference subdivision potential without at least a number of qualifiers in regard to capital expense versus return on investment.	
		4	If you have any questions, please contact the Mineral County Environmental Health and Planning Department at 406-822-3525.	

**Public Hearing for the
Proposed 320-Acre Rehbein Addition to the
Fish Creek Wildlife Management Area**
Meeting held in Alberton (Alberton Community Center)
October 20, 2015 (6:30 p.m.)

Public Testimony:

Mark Kuypers, President, WestSlope Chapter (650 members) of Trout Unlimited (TU):

- I camped at Fish Creek in April 1976, and fish were spawning by our campsite
- Hope we can preserve this area forever
- The WestSlope Chapter of TU supports this purchase
- It's an excellent place for rearing of juvenile fish fry
- Over the past 5-7 years, the WestSlope Chapter has demonstrated a commitment to Fish Creek and the Lower Clark Fork
- The WestSlope Chapter has funded a lot of projects that have provided jobs and economic benefits. 2012 Woody debris project.
- We are willing to contribute funding and labor, if this property is purchased
- It's a beautiful, special place.
- Clark Fork needs places like this, in addition to the fishing values in Fish Creek